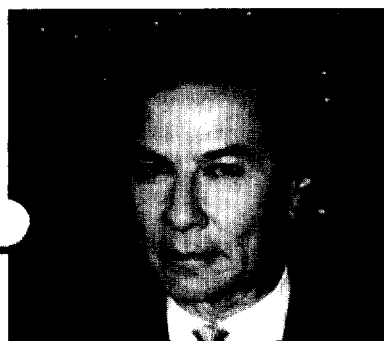
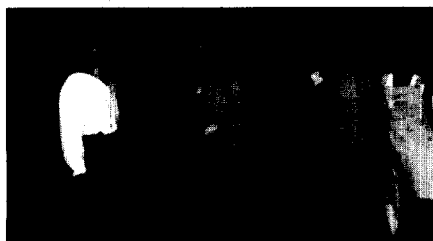
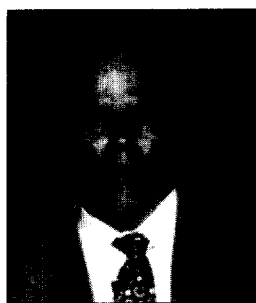
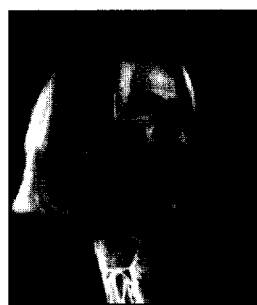
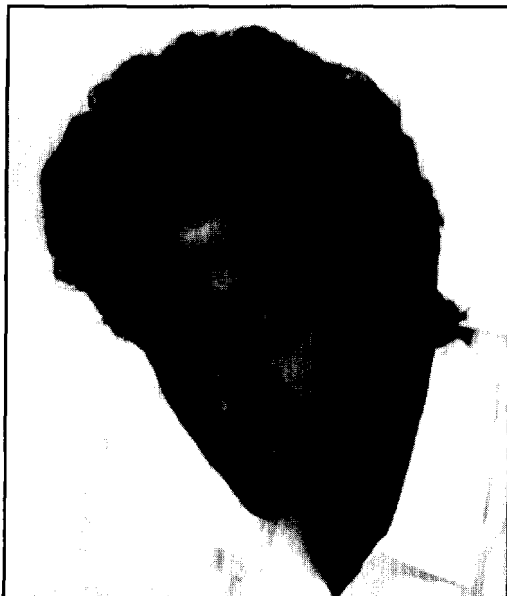
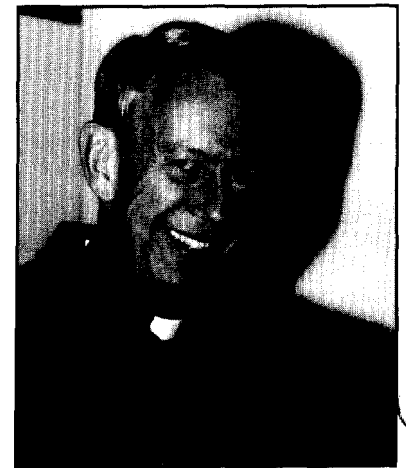
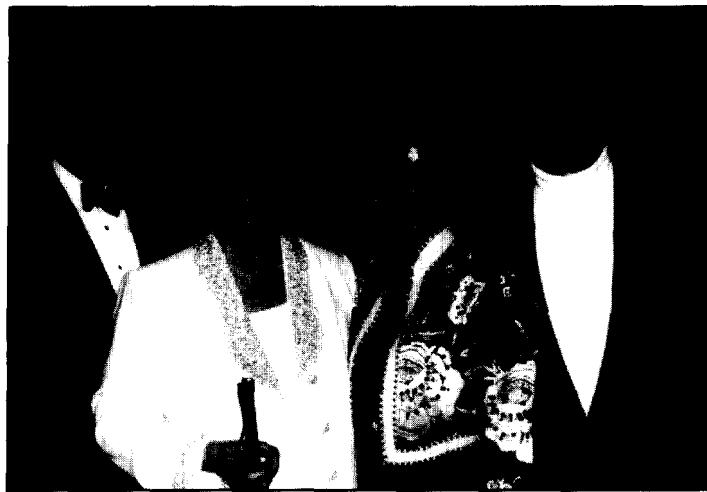
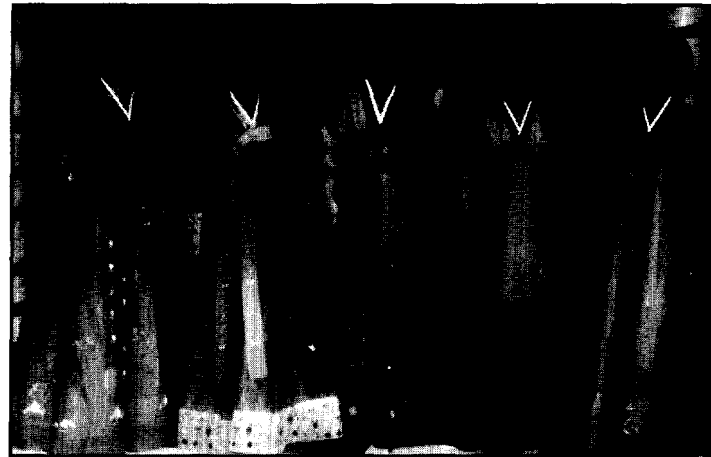


# *f Christmas*



able for December, 1997



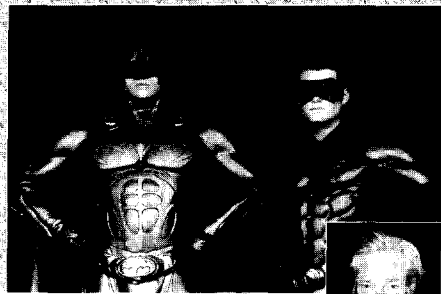
Helen Harris, Producer  
The Eyes of Christmas  
P.O. Box 900  
Woodland Hills, CA 91365  
1 (800) FIGHT RP      Fax: (818) 992-3265

# Theatre Vision<sup>®</sup>

## AUDIO DESCRIPTION FOR THE BLIND & VISUALLY CHALLENGED



PARAMOUNT PICTURES  
"HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS"  
Theatre Vision Narration:  
CYNTHIA STEVENSON



WARNER BROTHERS PICTURES  
"BATMAN FOREVER"  
Theatre Vision Narration:  
MICHAEL GOUGH



CASTLE ROCK ENTERTAINMENT'S  
"THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT"  
Theatre Vision Narration:  
MARTIN SHEEN



WALT DISNEY'S  
"POCAHONTAS"  
Theatre Vision Narration:  
IRENE BEDARD



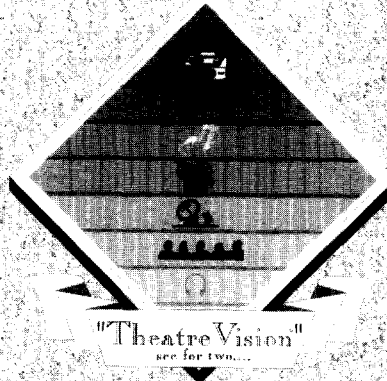
20th CENTURY FOX'S  
"THE TRUTH ABOUT CATS & DOGS"  
Theatre Vision Narration:  
CASEY KASEM



COLUMBIA PICTURES  
"LITTLE WOMEN"  
Theatre Vision Narration: KATHARINE HEPBURN,  
JUNE ALLISON, JANET LEIGH & MARGARET O'BRIEN



UNIVERSAL PICTURES  
"FLIPPER"  
Theatre Vision Narration is  
Currently in Production



UNIVERSAL PICTURES  
"APOLLO 13"  
Theatre Vision Narration:  
WILLIAM SHATNER



PARAMOUNT PICTURES  
"FORREST GUMP"  
Theatre Vision Narration:  
VIN SCULLY



WALT DISNEY'S  
"THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME"  
Theatre Vision Narration:  
DAVID OGDEN STIERS



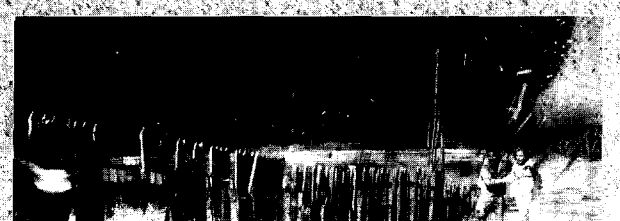
PARAMOUNT PICTURES  
"MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE"  
Theatre Vision Narration:  
ANGIE DICKINSON



PARAMOUNT PICTURES  
"BRAVEHEART"  
Theatre Vision Narration: VIN SCULLY



UNIVERSAL PICTURES  
"SCHINDLER'S LIST"  
AMBLIN ENTERTAINMENT



WARNER BROTHERS & UNIVERSAL PICTURES "TWISTER"  
Theatre Vision Narration In Process

We thank the participating studios.

Talking Eyes for the Blind  
created by  
Helen Harris

# TheatreVision®

*The world of the blind  
will never be the same...*

Major motion pictures  
prepared for the  
enjoyment of the blind

THE STORY OF THEATREVISION  
December 28, 1994



TheatreVision describes  
THE ACADEMY AWARDS



FORREST GUMP



World Premiere  
TheatreVision  
Paramount Studios

Disney's  
POCAHONTAS



SCHINDLER'S LIST



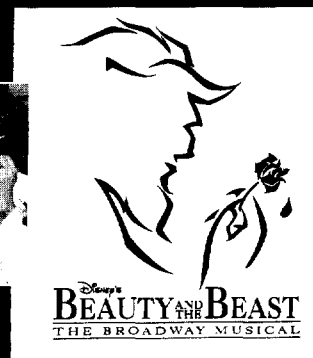
Steven Spielberg



Disney's  
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST



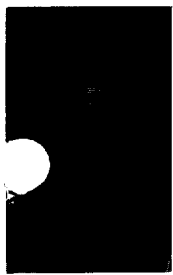
Disney's Theatre



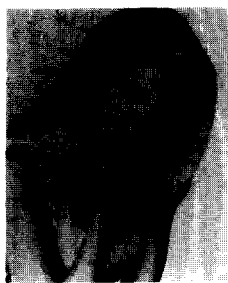


"Little Women"  
Described by  
June Allyson  
Janet Leigh  
Margaret O'Brien  
Sony Pictures Studios August 2, 1995





David Hasselhoff



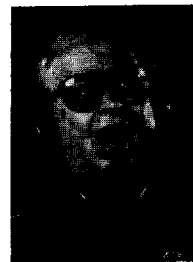
Tori Spelling



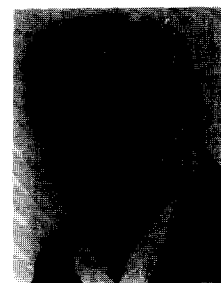
Noley Thornton



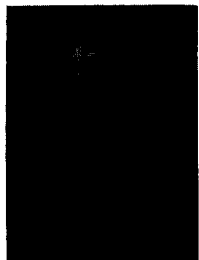
Albert Stern



Mel Torme'



Howard Keel



Casey Kasem



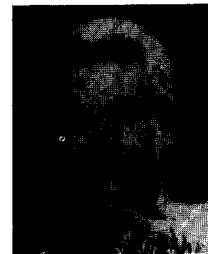
Steve Allen



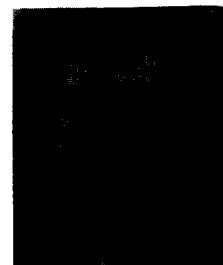
Shirley Jones Ingles & Marty Ingles



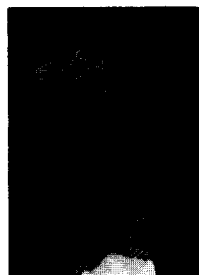
Paula Lopez



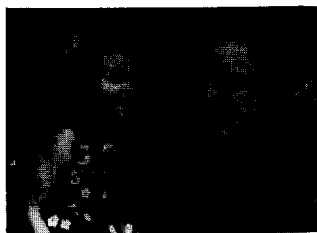
Anne Jeffreys



Ron Masak



Jack Jones



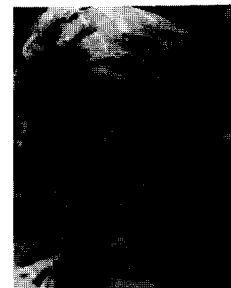
Michelle Burke & Charlton Heston



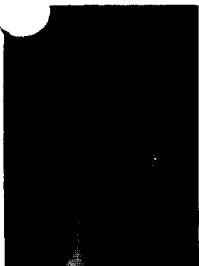
Bob Hope & Helen Harris



Bob Hope & Michelle Burke



Craig Hurley



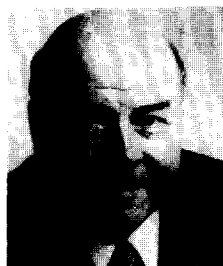
Bruce Jenner



Stefanie Powers



Melody Kay



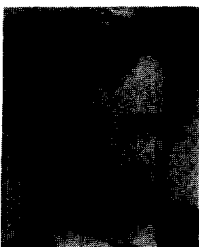
Dana Elcar



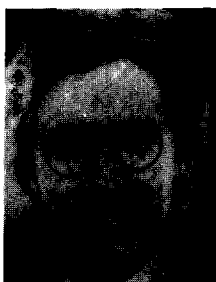
Charlton Heston



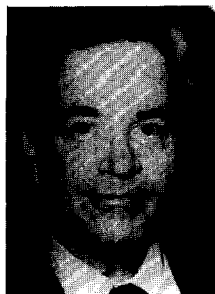
Steve Garvey & Michelle Burke



John Beard



Fritz Coleman



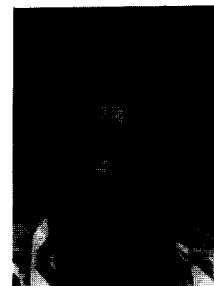
David Doyle



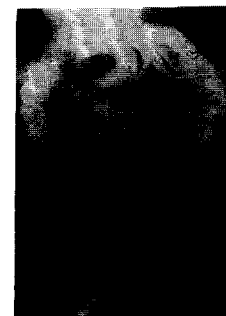
AudioVision®

1993

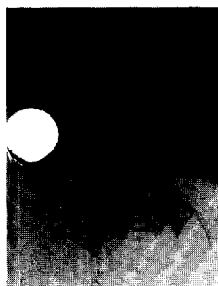
RP International



Bobby Goldsboro



Eddie Albert



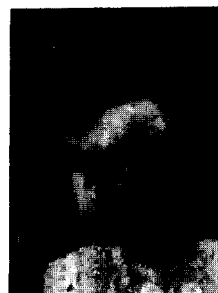
Joan Rivers



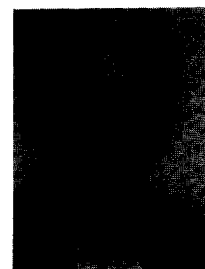
Kelly Lange



Mel Torme' & Children



Georgia Frontiere



Richard Fredrick



Vin Scully

Sandra Scully

**Attachment 7:**

**Press Coverage  
Support of TheatreVision™**

Helen Harris  
President and Founder  
RP International & TheatreVision™  
Post Office Box 900  
Woodland Hills, CA 91365

CS Docket No 97-141

# NATO NEWS

MARCH 1995

Aid For the Visually-Impaired

## Cineplex Venue Hosts TheatreVision Preview

HOLLYWOOD — Cineplex Odeon's Fairfax Theatre in Hollywood hosted on Dec. 28 the first sneak preview of TheatreVision, a system that utilizes narration to help vision-impaired moviegoers. Those who attended the special screening of "Forrest Gump" used FM receivers to hear veteran broadcaster Vin Scully



Visually-impaired moviegoers at the Fairfax screening

describe what they could not see.

"I'm amazed at how simple this is to do, and I can't believe it hasn't been done before," commented Cineplex general manager Kevin O'Neill, who personally greeted each of the guests.

According to Helen Harris, who was blinded by retinitis pigmentosa and today serves as president of Retinitis Pigmentosa International and on TheatreVision's advisory committee, this new system was designed to help the 10 million people who are so visually impaired they cannot read ordinary print.

"I'm so sad listening to young people who call 1-800 FIGHT RP," said Harris at the sneak preview. "And now the sadness has left, and the beautiful dawn of vision is with us as we enter the 21st century. It is truly an historic moment."

To use TheatreVision, vision-impaired moviegoers can bring their own FM receivers, (with either one earphone or, in the case of those with hearing aids, complete headsets) to a theatre and dial in a special soundtrack that is broadcast via a special FM frequency from a tiny transmitter in the projection booth.

"It will bring back the ability to go to the movies alone," said Harris. "When I heard the description of the opening scene, just the title 'Paramount Pictures,' against the snowcapped mountain backdrop with the white clouds above it brought an instant flash of childhood recognition. The words and picture shot into my eyes in a flash. As [Scully] continued to describe the movie, beginning with the floating feather and its journey, I realized how much I really want to see again."

"My husband and I love to go to the movies, but now that I'm blind he has to tell me everything that's occurring on the screen," said one 40-year old housewife who attended the sneak. "The other day he tried to do it in a quiet way in a motion picture theater in Pasadena, but the man next to him told him to be quiet. And so we both sat in silence, he seeing the movie, and me not. We are almost in tears because now he will never have to lean over and whisper the movie in my ear all evening. A part of me will miss that. It's wonderful, and I hope there are more movies like this coming out soon."

"The one thing I miss most is going to the movies with my friends, and now I believe I can again," said a blind 14-year-old girl who attended the screening. "I am happy. I hope they find a cure for my eyes, but in the meantime at least I can go to the movies with my friends again. This is wonderful."

Filmmakers wishing to utilize TheatreVision can contact Harris at 1-800-344-4877. She said RPI's team of experienced audio professionals and specialists are able to create descriptions of scenes with the filmmaker (who has final approval on all TheatreVision scripts). The entire process, depending upon the length of the film, is anticipated to take two to three weeks during post production. □



## BATMAN FOREVER "SEEN" BY THE BLIND THANKS TO CFVS IN UK



Henry Dobson, Dubbing Mixer/Director (Lt); Steve Southgate, Vice President, CFVS; and Michael Gough collaborate at Magmasters sound studio in London.

A blind woman wearing dark glasses uses a cane to make her way out of a movie theater. She is grinning from ear to ear and exclaims to those around, "I just *saw* that movie!"

A true story, the woman's statement is not as far fetched as you might think. Thanks to Helen Harris, Founder and President of Retinitis Pigmentosa International (RP International), and some industry cooperation, movies like BATMAN FOREVER are now accessible to the visually impaired.

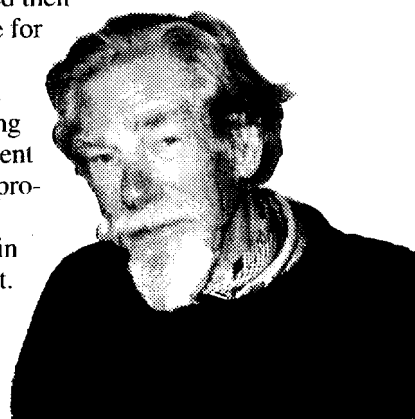
Harris created TheatreVision© – a new process of incorporating a special audio track for feature films that runs concurrently with the dialogue of the picture. This track provides a "descriptive narration" of what is being shown on the screen, so those without sight can still experience the wonderful medium of motion pictures by listening through a small headset.

When RP International approached Barry Reardon (President, Warner Bros. Distributing Corporation), Warner Bros. got involved by creating a recording for BATMAN FOREVER. CFVS (Corporate Film & Video Services) in the United

Kingdom arranged for Michael Gough (Alfred the Butler from the Batman movies), who was working in a play at the National Theatre in London, to do the recording which took eight hours.

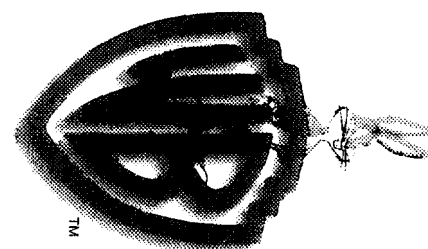
"Michael is a real gentleman," says Steve Southgate (Vice President, Corporate Film & Video Services for Warner Bros.), "He donated his time, he's 85 years young and has a wonderful Shakespearian voice."

A representative of RP International likewise praises Steve Southgate and all who helped bring the project to fruition saying that the recording is "outstanding and works perfectly." The organization expressed their gratitude for the skill, attention and caring which went into the project and showed in the result.



MARCH/APRIL 1996

Michael Gough (Alfred the Butler from the Batman movies) donated his time (and voice) to make a recording so the visually impaired could "see" BATMAN FOREVER.



# BATMAN FOREVER

# Los Angeles Times

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1995

## WOODLAND HILLS

### Narration Brings Movies to the Blind

Thanks to Helen Harris, blind moviegoers may not stay in the dark much longer.

Harris, head of Retinitis Pigmentosa International in Woodland Hills, has come up with the idea of TheatreVision, a process that allows the blind to receive film narration through a headset.

The invention will officially debut tonight at a special showing of the smash movie "Forrest Gump" at Paramount Studios in Hollywood.

"It brings back the memory of seeing," said Harris, 58, who first got retinitis pigmentosa, a degenerative, hereditary eye disease, when she was 8 years old. She became completely blind seven years ago.

"I can walk into the theater with a sighted person and watch the movie my way," she said.

Harris first thought of the concept a few years ago after friends stopped inviting her to movies because they got tired of trying to explain every-

thing to her and annoying others in the audience. She became especially frustrated in 1993 when everyone raved about "Schindler's List."

Nobody would take her. Enough was enough.

She met with Sherry Lansing, head of Paramount Pictures, who suggested "Forrest Gump" be used as TheatreVision's first film.

Harris then enlisted the help of Dodger broadcaster Vin Scully, who provides the narrative. Scully describes the action in the film when there is no dialogue.

"The blind person is still getting all the verbal communication," Harris said.

Harris said she and a friend wrote the narrative, and that Digital Theater Systems in Westlake Village provided a way to synchronize the sound with the movie.

She estimates it would cost theaters about \$8,000 apiece to install the technology for TheatreVision.

Her organization is trying to raise money to help theaters across the country, Harris said, and though it may cost millions of dollars, "it would let 10 million people have access to motion pictures."

—MICHAEL ARKUSH

# Los Angeles Times

REGULATION  
10¢ PER COPY 1.85¢ PER COPY SUNDAY

THURSDAY, AUGUST 3, 1995  
COPYRIGHT 1995 THE TIMES MICROFILM COMPANY 1-811-464-6229

DAILY 25¢  
DESIGNATED AREAS HIGHWAY

## Lights, Camera, Narration

Woodland Hills Woman  
Dreams of 'TheatreVision'  
for Visually Impaired

By BOB POOL  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

**B**eing blind accounts for Helen Harris' unusual vision for the movie industry. In her mind, she sees thousands of other sightless people sitting in theaters, enjoying the latest films by listening to a running account of the on-screen action through headphones.

That explains why two stars from the 1948 movie classic "Little Women" were back on the old MGM lot in Culver City on Wednesday dubbing a new soundtrack for the 1994 remake of the Louisa May Alcott story.

Janet Leigh and Margaret O'Brien were narrating the "Little Women" version that stars Winona Ryder and Susan Sarandon. Listening through earphones to the film's dialogue and music, the two veteran actresses were recording descriptions of scenes unfolding on a screen in front of them.

Their narration is designed to be played through wireless headphones to vision-impaired moviegoers. So far Harris has done four films; two more are on tap. They have been shown only at special screenings.

But Harris, a Woodland Hills resident who heads a blind-support group called Retinitis Pigmentosa International, views the narration process as eventually playing at a theater near you.

She has won the support of Hollywood's largest studios for the venture she calls "TheatreVision." Theater owners are next in her sights.

"People assume that blind people aren't interested in movies," says Harris. "But that's not true."

The TheatreVision process borrows heavily from the concept of old-time radio dramas. Narration is woven around a film's regular music, dialogue and sound effects.

Leigh and O'Brien had little difficulty sandwiching in their descriptions during Wednesday's daylong dubbing session in a Sony Studios sound room. The pair — who will be joined later by former co-star June Allyson for recording work — volunteered



Actresses Margaret O'Brien and Janet Leigh, left, are recording narration for "Little Women." Helen Harris, below, hopes movie theaters will install headphone systems for visually impaired viewers.



## London hailed for film 'Braille'

By Jonathan Davies

Paramount Pictures' Barry London was honored Friday for being the first studio executive to authorize the adoption of the TheaterVision system. The system was called "the biggest invention since the development of Braille in terms of communication for the sightless," according to Retinitis Pigmentosa International founder and president Helen Harris.

London, vice chairman of Paramount's Motion Picture Group, received the RPI's 1995 Humanitarian Award in honor of music publisher Lester Sill for presenting "Forrest Gump" in the TheaterVision format, which allows blind and partially sighted audiences to hear a description of the action via headphones.

"I cannot tell you what it was like to sit in the Fairplex Odeon with 200 blind people (for a screening of 'Forrest Gump')," said Harris, who has the hereditary eye disease retinitis pigmentosa. In accepting the award at the Beverly Hilton Hotel, London said that one of his first concerns was how filmmakers would react to having their work modified slightly to accommodate TheaterVision. However, he said the project met with universal acceptance.

"For people to who cannot see to now be able to participate in movies is a wonderful thing," he said.

"Gump" producer Steve Tisch, who presented the award, told the audience: "The world will never be the same once you've seen it through the eyes of Forrest Gump. Barry London was the one who made sure that the visually impaired were able to see the world through the eyes of Forrest Gump."

"The Brady Bunch" and "Gilligan's Island" producer Sherwood Schwartz was presented with RPI's lifetime achievement award. Other awardees, honored for their vision in television and film, included James Cameron, Lawrence Kasdan, Ridley Scott, Quentin Tarantino, Lorne Michaels, Bill Allen, Barney Rosenzweig, Ken Wales, William Bell and Melissa Cornick. Physician Donald Schwartz was honored for his research into eye disorders with the Jules Stein Living Tribute Award.

The evening, which was hosted by Peter Marshall, included appearances by RPI co-chairman Charlton Heston and Bob Denver, Meg Ryan, George Clooney and Monty Hall, who held a live auction to raise money for the organization. □

# This go-getter tells RP to R.I.P.

## Valley mom heads effort to cure a blinding disease

By Janet Weeks  
Daily News Staff Writer

**H**elen Harris lives by a credo taken from a line in a Dylan Thomas poem: For 22 years, she has raged against the dying of the light. The Woodland Hills resident has retinitis pigmentosa, a little-known, little-understood disease that causes blindness. More than 3.5 million Americans suffer from RP.

When she was diagnosed in the 1970s, doctors told her there was no cure, no research into finding one and no course of treatment. They also told her she likely had passed it on to her children.

Perhaps the doctors thought their utter lack of hope would lead Harris off into the night to find her own way with guide dogs and braille books.

They were wrong.

They said there wouldn't be any research conducted because there were not enough people with the disease to make it worth their while researching," Harris, 50, recalled.

"I said, 'What the hell are you talking about? How dare they say there's no one else out there like me.'"

As angry. And she stayed angry. And that anger drove her to do what she never thought she could.

Without business experience or a game plan, the self-described "housewife" founded Retinitis Pigmentosa International (RPI) International. Starting with \$500 in seed money, she quickly built a network of volunteers and referral services, and it has helped shepherd \$25 million into eye-disease research over the last 22 years.

The organization now is campaigning to make movies — such as "Forrest Gump," "Pocahontas" and "Little Women" — accessible to the blind.

Helen Harris has been instrumental in bringing hereditary eye disease to the attention of organizations that fund research," said James McGinnis, a UCLA neurobiologist who is researching retinal cell transplantation as a possible cure for RP.

Harris is a key proponent behind transplantation research. She has testified before congressional committees in Washington, D.C., and is in touch with then-president George Bush to discuss the need for funding.

Retinal cell transplantation involves moving healthy retinal cells from an area of the eye not yet

affected by RP into an area already in decline. Or the healthy cells can come from a donor — a living donor.

McGinnis also is exploring the possibility of removing unhealthy retinal cells, "fixing" them in a culture and placing them back into the retina. He describes "fixing" as infecting the cells with a virus that would destroy the RP.

Before Harris took up the cause, McGinnis said, retinal cell research was criticized as being without scientific merit.

"People looked upon it as a Frankenstein-type experiment," he said. Today, many see transplantation techniques as the best hope for preventing blindness from RP, although operations performed on humans have had mixed results.

Harris' success has come despite her ever-worsening sight and sometimes-flailing spirit.

Her field of vision has narrowed over the years to pinholes. She can see light and sometimes figures. But nothing else.

RP is unrelenting and cruel, Harris said bluntly. She said people who play down blindness as a simple disability overcome by "training" are not telling the whole truth.

She prefers not to sugarcoat the condition's effects. She cannot see her children or a sunrise or a flower. She cannot paint the dreamy, impressionist pictures that were once her passion.

"I've had vision," she said. "So I know what you see. And I know what I've lost. And it's always played down. It's always played like, 'This my want blind and get a guide dog and lived happily ever after.'"

Harris' foundation has a toll-free number that provides information, referrals and other support to sufferers. Through the years, she has heard from thousands who are having trouble coping with their condition.

"Now I tell you about the 30 in phone calls from people who are going blind or people who are already blind and their blindness keeps on taking them."

"There's this stage where it's finally coming and you can't believe that it's coming and you want to quit. You want to get away from it. But you can't. And then it's there. It's pretty horrible."

Much of the money raised for RPI has come from celebrity events — telethons, banquets, fashion shows and awards dinners. Her work organizing the events and mustering star-studded guest lists has made Harris a Hollywood



Helen Harris, founder of Retinitis Pigmentosa International, listens as Irene Bedard, the speaking voice of Pocahontas, records a descriptive soundtrack for the animated film 'Pocahontas.'



"Nobody has ever told me what blindness looks like. It's not black. It's not white. It's not different colors. It's not a mix of colors. It's just black. And it's not black. It's not invisible. If it were invisible, it would be easier to deal with. But it's not invisible. It's in your head. Way back in here."

— Helen Harris

player.

Her office is lined with autographed photos of Bob Hope, George Burns and Charlton Heston. She appears in an RPI fund-raising video with Oliver Stone. She put together a "We Are the World"-type fund-raising record that featured Dionne Warwick, Pat LaBelle, Angie Dickinson and Smokey Robinson. She lists Steve Allen and Jayne Meadows among her friends.

"There aren't many Helen Harris on earth," pushed Allen. "Thank God for the few we have."

Harris' relationship with the entertainment industry started when she figured out that celebrities can bring media attention to a cause

faster than people not in the public eye.

"I had these two words: retinitis pigmentosa," she said. "And they are really horrible words. People can't pronounce them. I realized that no one is going to know what that means, but maybe they can identify with a celebrity like Charlton Heston."

Of course, she didn't know Charlton Heston or anyone else in Hollywood at the time. Yet she contacted him, and he became the first celebrity who agreed to help.

"It really is a miracle," she said of Heston's assistance. "I used to not say that because I was afraid I'd get classified as a religious freak. But the truth is what it is. I was an

ordinary Woodland Hills housewife. So why would Charlton Heston pay attention to me?"

Harris' latest project has Harris rubbing elbows with Hollywood's top film directors: Oliver Stone, Steven Spielberg and Robert Zemeckis.

The three are working with Harris on TheatreVision, a marriage of technology, writing and narration that she hopes will make movies accessible to the blind. Harris came up with the basic idea — the big picture — and others are helping with the details.

So far, they've developed a way to place a second soundtrack on a

See HARRIS / Page 5

## Harris

Continued from Page 4

film. In that soundtrack, which is inaudible to the audience, a narrator can be heard describing

"described version" is the latest remake of "Little Women," starring Winona Ryder. Harris convinced three stars from the 1994 remake — Jane Allyson, Janet Leigh and Margaret O'Brien — to lend their voices to the narration. The newly narrated movie will be shown at several fund-raising

back in here.

"It has a lot to do with your mind and memory, and it has a lot to do with being in the dark and trying to live in the sunlight. You have to tell yourself the sunlight is there all the time. You really have to make your own light everyday."

Harris' foundation is now

disease is in its middle stage.

"One of the things that kept blindness from being cured is that people thought it couldn't be cured," she said. "People believed the cure for blindness was a guide dog or braille. There was so much energy put into that that no one

# New vision

ovie-lover finds method to make films accessible to visually impaired

Michael J. Sandler  
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

## High Profile

ANGELES — Helen Harris loves movies. But she suffers from acute retinitis pigmentosa, after years of very limited vision, today she has no vision. So to do something about her problem.

Harris is founder and president of TheatreVision, a national (RPI), based in a Los Angeles office. Its objectives, she says, are to increase public awareness of the need for money for promising new ways to make movies available to visually impaired patients. TheatreVision, falls into the category of a nonprofit.

Harris, a theater in Los Angeles, presented "Home for the Holidays" at TheatreVision, which attracted visually impaired audiences to as never before. Using a specially designed system, patrons listen to an audio description that describes the action, costumes and other aspects. This narration is carefully placed between sections of

the film. Harris, who was tested in the spring of 1994 for "Schindler's List," has been making about a dozen films. "Gump," "Braveheart," "Apollo 13," "The American," and "Schindler's List" among others are accessible to the blind or visually

impaired. For example, in "Forrest Gump," Harris narrated the pickup truck chase at top speed through a chain-link fence to the high school athletic field where the legendary Alabama Bear Bryant, wearing his trademark hat, Bryant and the high school watch as Forrest runs past and keeps running. "The film is simple. I get people out of their social activity — just one person can be free, be like

everybody else, with their families and friends, be accepted and have fun."

Retinitis pigmentosa, a degenerative hereditary disease, usually first manifests itself in the preteen years as night blindness. That is how Harris encountered it, when she was 8.

"I remember the night I went with my sister to the corner deli in West Philadelphia to carry home bags of food," she recalls. "I walked straight into a tree, and the groceries went all over. My sister screamed that we were going to be late, but I was on my knees as the cans rolled away down the street."

"I was terrified. It wasn't the dark that scared me, or the violence — because there wasn't any violence there then. It was the fact that I might not be able to find the store, or my way home, and that I would run into trees headfirst, and lamp posts and curbs. I did that all the time."

Ironically, Harris — like most retinitis pigmentosa sufferers — has had 20-20 vision for most of her life, yet is legally blind. The condition creates a tunnel vision of sorts, a loss of peripheral vision as one sees the center clearly. Peer through a tiny crack between an enclosed thumb and forefinger and you can approximate the view.

The disease, identified in the mid-19th Century, affects some 3.5 million people worldwide. But, Harris says, because many more people suffer from front-of-the-eye conditions such as glaucoma and cataracts, there have been limited research funds for retinitis pigmentosa. Nonetheless, she continues to lobby for her cause, even once getting the Congressional Record to print testimony consisting of 10 blank pages — symbolizing the text that a blind person can read.

About five years ago, after she had painted, as a hobby, oil canvases — including striking replications of the Sistine Chapel ceiling and Jerusalem's Western Wall that hang in her outer office — the narrow slit through which Harris had viewed the world



Helen Harris, center, is joined by actresses June Allyson and Janet Leigh, who costarred in the 1949 version of "Little Women," and narrated the 1994 version for TheatreVision.

closed. Today, infrequently, a window reopens for a few minutes or hours.

Harris began her efforts on behalf of retinitis pigmentosa much earlier, in March 1972, for a purely selfish reason — the fact that two of her three sons, at 10 and 8, were diagnosed as having signs of the disease.

Ordinarily, children aren't routinely tested for retinitis pigmentosa, but Harris' awareness prompted her and her husband to proceed with complex electroretinographic tests — not unlike EKGs — for all three boys.

Today, although the time bomb exists in Jim's and Richard's systems, at ages 33 and 32, married but not parents, they have few symptoms of the disease.

The notion of TheatreVision came to Harris one day as she pondered what would make a real difference in people's lives. What was tough for them?

"I thought, 'What's tough is sitting alone in the dark, not being able to see your clothes, to watch TV, to see what the kids look like, to read the greeting cards they give you. Somebody gets married and you can't see the wedding dress. You can't see your own son at the altar. It's losses and losses and losses.'"

"What could free them," I thought, "going to the mall? Yes, but it means canes and bumping into people. Going to the movies — walking into a movie theater, sitting down and getting lost in something for a couple of hours, totally

independent, without having to have someone tell you what was on the screen — then you could be free."

With typical bravado, Harris arranged an appointment at Amblin Productions soon after "Schindler's List" had won its Oscars. Producers Gerald Molen and Branko Lustig were enthusiastic about bringing their film to a new audience.

Harris wrote a rudimentary script as a test and showed the product — a film clip with audio narration — at her group's annual dinner. The response was immediate, and electric.

A section from the TheatreVision text for "Schindler's List" underscores what has been accomplished — and what might have been missed.

The narrations start: "Mr. Nussbaum drops a painting and a photo into his suitcase. His wife looks at him. Their eyes meet. She brushes his forehead, then continues sorting photos. The SS officers loom over their shoulders, smoking cigarettes and shifting impatiently. The front door opens . . . Mr. Nussbaum stops and uses a spoon to pry his mezuzah off the door post. He kisses it and slips it into his pocket. They join the massive procession of Jews moving down the street."

During the summer of 1994, Harris met with Sherry Lansing of Paramount.

"She gave me the tools — the continuity script and a copy of the film on video — to work with," Harris recalls.

The RP activist brought in a producer of commercials to write the narration and arranged for Scully, whose distinctive voice she recognized from books or tape, to donate his services. (All subsequent narrators have followed suit.)

On Dec. 28, 1994, 300 visually impaired Angelenos and a few friends and relatives came to a theater in West Hollywood in midmorning to "see" "Forrest Gump."

Throughout 1995 Harris continued to secure narrators, prints and theaters gratis as the concept blossomed.

Janet Leigh, June Allyson and Margaret O'Brien, who had costarred in the 1949 version of "Little Women," joined to narrate the TheatreVision edition of the 1994 edition. From her home in New York City, Katharine Hepburn, star of the 1933 version, added tracks. For Leigh, who calls the concept "wonderful," it has a personal resonance: Her grandmother was blind.

These days, thanks to such widespread beneficence, RPI schedules about a dozen showings of each film in processes, one every two weeks. "Nixon" and "Mr. Holland's Opus" are next in line.

Until now, all showings have been free, but Harris indicates that as the program expands, possibly to other cities across the United States, a nominal charge may be necessary.

Last December, four movies were shown in TheatreVision simultaneously in four halls at Universal City. Adding a new layer, Harris arranged for an independent television station in Los Angeles to show two older holiday films on television at Christmas.

It meant that in the same household, "you could actually have the sighted person watching the movie on one television while the blind person tuned in to the SAP channel on another set, using a headset to pick up the description."

If there was one moment when Harris realized what had been accomplished, it was the day of the TheatreVision screening of "Pocahontas," narrated by Irene Bedard, the original voice of the animated character.

"The parents were sitting with the kids, and I went along to see what it would be like. The minute all these kids began to laugh at the same time, I thought, 'This is it — this is unbelievable.' But then I wondered, 'Maybe I'm the only one feeling this.' So when I came out, I talked to the parents."

"One father started to cry and said, 'This is the first time I ever hear my daughter laugh with me in a movie theater without my having to explain to her what was going on.'"

**Attachment 8:**

**Quotes in Support of TheatreVision<sup>™</sup>  
from the visually challenged community**

Helen Harris  
President and Founder  
RP International & TheatreVision<sup>™</sup>  
Post Office Box 900  
Woodland Hills, CA 91365

CS Docket No 97-141



After TheatreVision.....

"Wow, this is incredible. I believe that this will change my life forever. At least I know that whether I'm blind and/or in a wheelchair, I will still be able to go to the movies and 'see' through "TheatreVision." It's incredible. I feel a new freedom, and that everyone who is blind or losing sight should be able to see what I've seen today. It gives me renewed hope. I hope every producer in Hollywood helps you, Helen, with TheatreVision.

An 87 year old woman.....

"Listen dear, I'm 87. I didn't expect to live this long. My husband and I were married for 60 years, and I could depend on him for everything. I'm glad for my life, but I don't like living it in the dark. This gives me hope that I can come down here across from my retirement home and see a picture and hear it described by my favorite sports announcer, Vin Scully. Yes, Helen, I love Vin Scully!"

Another comment.....

"I'm the activities director for Hotel Shalom, and I watch people lose their vision more and more since the population of America seems to be more over 50 than under. There are many more people unable to see than ever before. It's a very sad thing to watch their lives wither away as friends and relatives disappear from the responsibility of helping another to see."



## Quotes from Patrons Attending "TheatreVision's" First Showing

### Before TheatreVision.....

"I'm a 40 year old housewife. My husband and I love to go to the movies, but now that I'm blind he has to tell me everything that's occurring on the screen. The other day he tried to do it in a quiet way in a motion picture theater in Pasadena, but the man next to him told him to be quiet. And so, we both sat in silence... he seeing the movie, and me not."

### After TheatreVision.....

"We are almost in tears because now he will never have to lean over and whisper the movie in my ear all evening. A part of me will miss that." She giggled as she said that, and her husband was obviously very happy to know that his wife could sit in the motion picture theater and quietly listen to the movie as Vin Scully did the talking for him. "It's wonderful, and I hope there are more movies like this coming out soon. Thank you, Helen, for this wonderful day."

### Before TheatreVision.....

"My daughter is 14 years old and has just suddenly gone blind. We are devastated, but we heard what was happening here today so I thought I would bring her along. We just don't know where to turn. It's hard for teenagers to be told they will live in the dark forever."

### After TheatreVision.....

"She's like a new person," said the mother, and the 14 year old was beaming. The 14 year old daughter responded, "The one thing I miss most is going to the movies with my friends, and now I believe I can again. I am happy. I hope they find a cure for my eyes, but in the meantime at least I can go to the movies with my friends again. This is wonderful."

### Before TheatreVision.....

"I've been in this wheelchair for 8 months now. I'm 39 years old. I have diabetic retinopathy, have gone blind in one eye, and the other eye is failing with a kind of neuro-palsy. I've had three strokes, and so now I'm wheelchair bound also. As my eyes leave me and the wheelchair confines me, at 39 I can't even picture what my future will be like."

**Attachment 9:**

**Newsletter™**

Helen Harris  
President and Founder  
RP International & TheatreVision™  
Post Office Box 900  
Woodland Hills, CA 91365

CS Docket No 97-141

**Attachment 10:**

**Quote from the AFB Booklet**  
***Who's Watching***

Helen Harris  
President and Founder  
RP International & TheatreVision™  
Post Office Box 900  
Woodland Hills, CA 91365

CS Docket No 97-141

The following quotes, taken from a booklet released by the American Foundation for the Blind called Who's Watching? A Profile of the Blind and Visually Impaired Audience for Television and Video, by Jaclyn Packer, Ph.D. and Corinne Kirchner, Ph.D., emphasize the importance of video programming:

- ◆ Because so many people watch television and videos on a regular basis, those with visual impairments already make up a substantial part of the viewing audience. In fact, as viewers, they are similar in most ways to the general audience; as a group, they watch television and videotapes in similar numbers and with similar frequency to the general population, and -- our research suggests -- they have similar tastes and preferences in programming.
- ◆ Many blind and visually impaired people feel "left out" because they miss information that sighted people easily get in this culture where television and films play such a large part. Not only do they lack information or have to work harder to obtain information readily available to others, but they also are at a social disadvantage when they are not able to discuss popular topics like current movies or last night's TV sitcom. So-called "water cooler" discussions play a large part in adult social interaction, and similar types of discussions may play an even larger role in the lives of children and teenagers; being unable to participate fully limits interactions and can negatively affect one's self-concept.
- ◆ A special technique, video description, opens the possibility of full access to television and video for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Adding video description to a soundtrack is likely to increase the size of the audience of blind and visually impaired people for a videotape or television show, and is almost certain to enhance the viewing experience for the existing as well as the future audience of blind and visually impaired persons, plus family and friends who view the programs with them.

- ◆ Besides making programming more accessible to a greater number of people, video description fits the spirit of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA is a piece of landmark legislation with the purpose of bringing people with disabilities fully into civic and community life.
- ◆ In addition, media providers who offer video description of their programming reinforce the message that they are committed to *all* of their viewers. In sum, providing video description is the right thing to do!
- ◆ And, in a June 1997 AFB news release, Ted Littleford, executive creative director of the New York office of FCB, America's biggest advertising agency, quotes: "We forget that people who are blind or visually impaired also watch television, and thus commercials, and they can be a huge and important target audience for our biggest clients. What a difference it would make for all markets if video description was an established reality. We would be providing visually impaired people the equal access to information they deserve, and helping our clients reach this important and often-ignored target audience."